

**SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS:**

On page 1, insert the following between the title and the first paragraph --

This application is the national stage of PCT/EP03/00024 filed on January 03, 2003 and also claims Paris Convention priority of DE 102 07 720.7 filed on February 20, 2002.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION --.**

On page 2, insert as a title prior to the first paragraph

**-- SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION --.**

On page 6 insert as a title prior to the brief description of the drawings  
--

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING --.**

On page 6 insert as a title following the brief description of the drawings  
--

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT --.**

On page 10 replace as a title on line one "Claims" with  
-- I CLAIM: --

**CLAIM AMENDMENTS:**

1-22 cancelled

23. (new) A steering device suitable for use in a vehicle, the steering device structured and dimensioned for operation by an individual, the steering device comprising:

- a support structure;
- a steering wheel borne for rotation with respect to said support structure;
- a base part mounted to said support structure and not rotating along with said steering wheel;
- at least one light transmitting unit mounted to said base part, said light transmitting unit emitting light signals;
- at least one light receiving unit mounted to said base part for detecting said light signals;
- light switches mounted to said steering wheel for activation by the operating individual to switch or influence said light signals; and
- means for passing, in a contact-free manner, said light signals from said transmitting unit to said light switches and for passing, in a contact-free manner, said light signals from said light switches to said light receiving unit.

24. (new) The device of claim 23, wherein said passing means comprise light guides and/or light fingers.

25. (new) The device of claim 23, wherein said passing means comprise means for fanning out said light signals of said light transmitting

unit in said steering wheel, wherein fanned-out light signals pass said light switches.

26. (new) The device of claim 23, wherein said light signals are encoded.
27. (new) The device of claim 26, wherein said light signals are spectrally separated for encoding.
28. (new) The device of claim 26, wherein said light signals are pulsed for encoding.
29. (new) The device of claim 23, wherein said light switches are optically connected to different light receiving units.
30. (new) The device of claim 23, wherein said light transmitting unit transmits said light signals in a contact-free manner into at least one light guide ring disposed around an axis of rotation of said steering wheel on a steering wheel side, said light guide ring optically communicating with said light switches.
31. (new) The device of claim 30, wherein said at least one light guide ring, disposed about said axis of rotation of said steering wheel on said steering wheel side, accepts said light signals from said light switches.
32. (new) The device of claim 30, wherein said at least one light guide ring is scanned in a contact-free manner by said light receiving unit at a base part side.
33. (new) The device of claim 30, wherein feeding or scanning is at least one of direct, indirect, and using light fingers.

34. (new) The device of claim 30, wherein a plurality of light guide rings are disposed next to each other along said axis of rotation.
35. (new) The device of claim 30, wherein outer radii of a plurality of light guide rings are largely identical.
36. (new) The device of claim 30, wherein a plurality of light guide rings are substantially disposed in one single plane, concentrically about said axis of rotation.
37. (new) The device of claim 30, wherein said light transmitting unit and said light receiving unit are disposed radially or axially proximate to said light guide ring.
38. (new) The device of claim 30, wherein said light guide ring is part of a steering angle measuring means code disc which is rotationally coupled with said steering wheel.
39. (new) The device of claim 30, wherein said light transmitting unit transmits said light signals into said light guide ring disposed about said axis of rotation of said steering wheel from a base part side, said signals being processed in a contact-free manner by at least one light finger optically communicating with said light switch.
40. (new) The device of claim 39, wherein at least one light finger is disposed on a steering wheel side to transmit said light signals in a contact-free manner from said light switch to said light guide ring disposed about said axis of rotation of said steering wheel on said base part side.

41. (new) The device of claim 39, wherein a plurality of guide rings are substantially disposed in a single plane in concentric circles about said steering axis.
42. (new) The device of claim 39, wherein a plurality of light guide rings are disposed on or in said base part.
43. (new) The device of claim 23, wherein said at least one light transmitting unit comprises an LED or a photo transistor.
44. (new) The device of claim 43, wherein said base part is a printed circuit board on which LEDs and/or photo transistors are directly or indirectly disposed.